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For Immediate Release

The Regional Municipality of York to reduce plastic waste through mandatory compostable Green Bin liners

Green Bin program moves to new phase

NEWMARKET – The Regional Municipality of York is making the Green Bin program more environmentally friendly with the implementation of mandatory compostable bags for Green Bins and kitchen containers.

Effective May 1, 2011, plastic bags will no longer be accepted in York Region's Green Bin program.

"York Region is dedicated to creating and maintaining environmentally-sound programs," said York Region Chairman and CEO Bill Fisch. "Implementing mandatory compostable bags as part of the Green Bin program is a viable method to reduce unnecessary trash from landfill. This is an important step that will result in an incremental increase in diversion."

Plastic bags cannot decompose with organic material. When used as bin liners in the Green Bin program, they are removed from the final composted material and sent to landfill for disposal. Bags labelled as biodegradable only break down into smaller particles, contaminating compost with bits of plastic.

Certified compostable bags made of cornstarch or other plant-based materials break down completely into compost. Only certified compostable plastic bags, displaying the compostable logo, will be accepted. Paper bags, which do not require the compostable bag logo, will also be accepted.

Organics make up more than one-third of what we throw out. Food waste, dirty diapers, pet waste and food-soiled paper products are accepted in the Green Bin. By participating in the program or using a backyard composter, York Region residents are helping to reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill. At the same time, organic waste is turned into a valuable product, suitable for horticultural and agricultural use, land reclamation and roadside erosion control.

"When used to its maximum potential, the Green Bin program can divert more than one-third of waste from landfill," said Town of Richmond Hill Regional Councillor Vito Spatafora, Chair of the Region's Environmental Services Committee. "York Region has a strong participation rate and we know residents will continue to enthusiastically support the Green Bin program."

York Region will undertake a public communication campaign over the coming months to educate our residents on the benefits of using compostable bags. These bags are readily available throughout York Region at grocery, hardware and retail stores. For more information on the Green Bin program including a list of retailers stocking compostable bags, please visit www.york.ca/waste

For more information on The Regional Municipality of York, please visit www.york.ca

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